

KINGDOM EXTRAVAGANZA

MATTHEW 13



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Kingdom Extravaganza: Matthew 13
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Matthew 13: Introduction

Jesus launches into a series of breath-taking parables to describe the scope and character of the Kingdom He came to proclaim and bring near. His teaching is aimed at the hearts of His hearers, to excite them about the prospects of the Kingdom, and firm up their commit to seek and pray for it.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 The Parable of the Soils

Pray Psalm 126.4, 5.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.
Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.

Sing Psalm 126.4, 5.

(Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!)

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

Read and meditate on Matthew 13.1-8, 18-23.

Prepare.

1. What are the different types of soil in this parable?
2. What is the seed, and who is the sower?

Meditate.

Jesus spent chapter 12 asserting that He is Lord – of the Sabbath, of forgiveness and justification, over Satan and demons, and even over death. We might expect that, on the heels of that astonishing series of assertions, Jesus would tell us something more about the Kingdom over which He rules, and which He came to bring near (Matt. 4.17). In chapter 13, He does not disappoint, unleashing a barrage of dizzying and glorious parables to capture the hearts and impress the minds of His hearers with the greatness, extent, and power of that domain over which He is Lord.

We begin with the parable of the soils, which we will consider in its entirety, skipping over for now Jesus' explanation of why He spoke in parables.

The focus of the parable is on the four soil types, each representing a different state of readiness of the human heart, from hard and unreceptive, through shallow and easily entangled, to good and productive. It's probably true that, at one time or another, our hearts show each of these facets. The goal, for those who are in the Lord's household – those who hear and do His Word (Matt. 12.48-50) – is to make our hearts into good soil, so that we receive the Word eagerly, sink it deep in our souls, and cultivate it daily through faithful reading and obedience, so that it brings forth the fruit God intends.

We must not be content *not* to hear and receive the Word. Persistence in so doing indicates a hardness of heart that has not truly received the good seed of God's Word. Nor must we be content for our faith to be merely shallow and without deep roots, or to become choked or snared by worldly distractions (Col. 3.16). Rather, we must ready our hearts, through confession and repentance, to receive the good seed of the Word from Jesus day by day, meditating on it, seeking ways immediately to carry out what it requires, and rejoicing in the Lord at every indication of fruitfulness. We do not expect to all bear the same fruit, or in the same quantities; but that some fruit is expected in our lives, Jesus has already explained (Matt. 12.33). We must be diligent to cultivate as much and as varied fruit as we can.

Seek the sowing of the good seed in your soul. Work it in deeply, meditating on the Word, comparing it with other passages of Scripture, even memorizing a verse, to set it in your mind. Seek the Lord for guidance and power to bring forth the fruit of the Word, and thus to prove that you are a true member of His household and Kingdom.

Seek also to sow the good seed of the Kingdom, and to encourage and help those among whom you sow it to open their hearts to the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom.

Reflect.

1. What is your practice of sowing the Word into your soul? How might you help that Word to take deeper root in your heart, mind, and conscience?
2. Just because someone may not be “ready” to receive the Word from us, does this mean we shouldn’t sow it? Explain.
3. How can you make sure your own soul is always “good soil” for the Word of the Lord?

Even as on bad ground there were three diverse situations (by the path, upon rocky ground and among thorns), so too on good ground the diversity is of three types: fruit of one hundredfold, sixtyfold and thirtyfold. Both in one and the other there is a change that takes place in the will, not in the nature itself. In both the unbelievers and believers it is the heart that receives the seed. Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Matthew 2.13.23

Today, Lord, let me both bear fruit and sow the good seed, as I...

Pray Psalm 126.1-6.

Jesus is sowing the good seed of the Kingdom through His servants. How will you sow that seed today?

Sing Psalm 126.1-6.

Psalm 126.1-6 (Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav’nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

2 To See and Not to See

Pray Psalm 72.7-14.

In His days the righteous shall flourish,
And abundance of peace,
Until the moon is no more.
He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him,
And His enemies will lick the dust.
The kings of Tarshish and of the isles
Will bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba
Will offer gifts.
Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him;
All nations shall serve Him.
For He will deliver the needy when he cries,
The poor also, and *him* who has no helper.
He will spare the poor and needy,
And will save the souls of the needy.
He will redeem their life from oppression and violence;
And precious shall be their blood in His sight.

Sing Psalm 72.7-14.

(Martyrdom: [*Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?*](#))

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures,
Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

And let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low.
Let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace.
All they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

Read Matthew 13.1-17; meditate on verses 10-17.

Prepare.

1. What did Jesus say was “given” to His disciples?
2. Whose eyes and ears are “blessed”?

Meditate.

Given how much Jesus spoke and taught about the Kingdom of God, it's striking that the subject almost never comes up with His detractors. Their problem with Jesus was twofold: First, He set aside their traditions as vain and unBiblical. Second, He claimed to be God. Both of those teachings challenged the authority of the religious leaders of the day, and turned their hearts against Him.

Or rather, these matters exposed their hearts as set against Him from the beginning.

Only when it looked like their opportunity to destroy Jesus was slipping away did they play the king card, warning Pilate that Jesus' claim to be King of Israel deserved death from the servants of Caesar. Otherwise, we don't hear much from the religious leaders about the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed and brought near.

This is because their hearts were so turned against Him, that they could not receive any of His teaching about the Kingdom. Jesus taught in parables because He knew two things: First, to those whom God had given – or would give – understanding into the mysteries of the Kingdom, the parables would ultimately make perfect sense, and guide them in their calling to the Kingdom and glory of God. Second, for those whose hearts were set against Jesus, and who had made up their minds to destroy Him, the parables would make no sense whatsoever. God would prevent them from making the connections the parables require. They would regard the parables as nonsense and not worthy of debate, not because they were, but because the leaders had already decided against Jesus.

Their hardness of heart did not thwart the Lord's plan; instead, He used their hardness to accomplish the work of redemption, for in their sending Jesus to the cross, they carried out God's good purpose in making Jesus the Sin-bearer for the world. But for those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, they would be blessed to know mysteries that prophets and righteous men longed to know, but did not (vv. 16, 17).

Reflect.

1. What are the mysteries of the Kingdom?
2. What qualifies someone to be able to receive and understand those mysteries?
3. How can we make sure that our eyes and ears are "blessed" when it comes to the mysteries of the Kingdom?

*He did not say "You see not" but "You shall indeed see but never perceive." He did not say "You do not hear" but "You shall indeed hear but never understand." So they first inflicted the loss on themselves, by stopping their ears, by closing their eyes, by making their heart fat. For they not only failed to hear but also "heard heavily," and they did this, he said, "lest they should turn for me to heal them." Thus he described their aggravated wickedness and their determined defection from him. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 45.1-2**

Show me how to seek the Kingdom today, Lord, in line with Jesus' teaching, and so that I...

Pray Psalm 72.15-20.

Ask the Lord to show you how to seek the Kingdom today, to give you insight into the mysteries of the Kingdom for your life and work today.

Sing Psalm 72.15-20.

Psalm 72.15-20 (Martyrdom: [*Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?*](#))

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right.

Let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim.

And may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.
And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forevermore!

3 Wheat and Tares

Pray Psalm 80.1-3.

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
You who lead Joseph like a flock;
You who dwell *between* the cherubim, shine forth!
Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
Stir up Your strength,
And come *and* save us!
Restore us, O God;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!

Sing Psalm 80.1-3.

(St. Theodulph: [*All Glory, Laud, and Honor*](#))
O God of grace, restore us, and shine on us Your face!
O save us, Lord, work for us; renew us by Your grace!
Give ear, O gracious Savior, Who leads us as Your flock:

Stir up Your pow'r and favor, our King and Lord and Rock!

Read Matthew 13.1-30, 36-43; meditate on verses 24-30, 36-43.

Prepare.

1. What does the field represent in this parable?
2. What do the wheat and tares represent?

Meditate.

In many ways, this is the defining parable of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God. It portrays conditions in the whole world (v. 38), from the beginning of Christ's sowing of the Kingdom seed to the final days of harvest (vv. 37, 40, 41). The parable embraces the whole of humankind, dividing them into two nations, or cities as Augustine would have it – those who bear true Kingdom fruit and those who do not. It provides an earthly stage for the great spiritual warfare that has gone on since Satan's rebellion against God in heaven. The parable addresses the final disposition and estate of all human beings. And it looks past the events of time and history to the final shining forth of the eternal Kingdom of the Father (v. 43).

Thus, this parable should provide a framework for our thinking, being, and doing as those who are forcing our way into the Kingdom of Jesus, deeper and deeper, day by day. We are engaged in a great spiritual warfare, and our calling, as we follow Jesus, is to sow, cultivate, defend, and tend to the good seed of the Kingdom of God. By our prayers, our good works, our conversations and witness, and our labors to advance the rule of Christ in every aspect of life, we are co-workers with Christ in bringing His Kingdom to expression on earth as it is in heaven.

We have a great, relentless, powerful, but *bound* foe who works continuously to thwart and undo all our Kingdom efforts. The world will always have an abundance of evil that impinges on and threatens to undermine and eradicate all Kingdom righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. But as Jesus goes forth each day, conquering and to conquer, so must we, each of us into our own

niche and sector of the world, for as long as the Lord is pleased to keep us here, working to sow and nurture good Kingdom fruit in every area of life.

Two more things: Note that Jesus says on the last day, His angels “will gather *out of His Kingdom* all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness” (v. 41). In the Kingdom of God are those who seem to belong there, but actually do not, and will not withstand the coming judgment, because they have no use for the Law of God (cf. Ps. 1.4-6). All who, whether by neglect or conscious choice, reject the Law of God will be seen as offensive to God, and will be removed from their supposed place in the Kingdom of the righteous.

Then, finally, we note that the world is the field in which Kingdom fruit is being sown and produced. The world is not a weed field, waiting to be burned: it is a wheat field, fraught with vast potential for bringing forth Kingdom fruit to the glory of God. It wants only laborers to join Jesus in His yoke, as He works to make all things new.

If you’re not laboring to bring the Kingdom of God to light, then you are working on the side of those powers that want to suppress and eradicate it. Devote yourself afresh to God, day by day, and go forth to sow, cultivate, and bear good Kingdom fruit in all you do.

Reflect.

1. Why do we say that this is a “defining” parable?
2. Does it make a difference whether we regard the world as a wheat field to be sown and cultivated, or a weed field to be burned? Explain.
3. What opportunities for sowing good Kingdom seed are before you today?

Consider now, if in addition to what we have already recounted, you can otherwise take the good seed to be the children of the kingdom, because whatever good things are sown in the human soul, these are the offspring of the kingdom of God. They have been sown by God the Word who was in the beginning with God. Wholesome words about anything are children of the kingdom. Origen (185-254), Commentary on Matthew 10.2

Lord, today as I go out into my Personal Mission Field – my part of Your field – help me to...

Pray Psalm 80.4-19.

Pray for God to renew His vine, to cultivate the field of the world for revival and awakening, and to call His people to repentance and renewal in all things.

Sing Psalm 80.4-19.

Psalm 80.4-19 (St. Theodulph: [*All Glory, Laud, and Honor*](#))

How long will You ignore all Your people’s fervent prayer?
Shall bitter tears fall ever? O Lord, renew Your care!
Our neighbors mock and scorn us, they laugh at our distress;
renew, O Lord, and turn us, look down on us and bless!

You set us free from sin, Lord, and planted us in grace;
we rooted in Your strong Word have spread from place to place.
Our shadow covered mountains, our branches reached the sea;
Your grace flowed like a fountain of life, abundantly.

Now You in wrath have spoken and bruised Your chosen vine.
We languish, Lord, are broken by wrath, deserved, divine.
Once more, Lord, hear our pleading: return and heal this vine!
Look down on us, so needy, and show Your love divine!

Though we be burned and perish because of Your command,
revive us, Lord, and cherish this son of Your right hand.
Then let us not return to our sinful, selfish ways,
but call on You and learn to surround You with our praise.

4 Small to Great

Pray Psalm 146.1, 2.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Sing Psalm 146.1, 2, 10.

(Hallelujah! What a Savior!: [*Man of Sorrows*](#))

Praise the Lord, my soul, give praise! While I live, His Name I'll raise,
and exalt Him all my days – God forever reigns in Zion!

Read Matthew 13.1-35; meditate on verses 31-35.

Prepare.

1. What seems to be the focus of the two parables presented here?
2. Why did Jesus speak in parables?

Meditate.

A few years back a book entitled *Good to Great* was all the rage among certain leaders in ministry. It was chock full of ideas and examples for how to move your work – ministry in the case of those I knew who were reading it – from a state of merely good to one of truly great.

It's good for us to think about life this way: How we can go from one state of being/existence/productivity to a higher one. We who are called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12) should especially be inclined to think this way. As Jesus showed in the two parables in these verses, growth and impact are inherent qualities of the Kingdom of God. It starts small, but it grows to become a flourishing realm, attracting inhabitants from all around (vv. 31, 32). Certainly, that has been the case with the Kingdom of God. Jesus blazed the trail for the Kingdom, then poured it out into the world on the first Christian Pentecost. From those small beginnings in Acts the Kingdom has spread like a growing vine to every place on earth (Ps. 80), and it continues growing and expanding to this day.

Moreover, like leaven in dough, it works transforming power to make something which is rather blah into that which is wholesome and wonderful and good (v. 33). The Kingdom works by divine and supernatural power (1 Cor. 4.20) to bring holy qualities to the world – righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18). As the Spirit massages the Kingdom into our souls and, through us, into our Personal Mission Fields, the qualities of the Kingdom that are so attractive begin to be apparent, and many are drawn to it.

The Kingdom goes from small to great wherever it takes root. The world is the field for Kingdom sowing, growth, and fruitfulness, and we who force our way ever deeper into that Kingdom carry its transforming power into every relationship, role, and responsibility of our lives. We should expect, pray about, and work for the Kingdom to go from small and good to great wherever Jesus sends us.

Jesus taught in parables because they have power to stimulate our imaginations and excite us in our souls. The psalmist told us to expect One Who would teach this way (Ps. 78.2), and Jesus is that One.

Reflect.

1. What should it mean for the Kingdom to go from small to great in your life?
2. What are the most important things you can do to realize more of the Kingdom's power and promise?
3. How have you experienced the transforming power of the Kingdom?

*Thus he meant to set forth the most decisive sign of its greatness. "Even so then shall it also be with respect to the gospel," he says. For his disciples were weakest of all and least of all. Nevertheless, because of the great power that was in them, it has grown and been unfolded in every part of the world. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 46.2**

Let the power of Your Kingdom increase in me today, Lord, as I...

Pray Psalm 146.5-10.

Commit your day to the Lord, and trust in Him to help you in seeking and advancing His Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

Sing Psalm 146.5-10.

Psalm 146.5-10 (Hallelujah! What a Savior! [*Man of Sorrows*](#))

Blessed are they whose hope resides in the Lord, Christ at His side.
By Him heav'n and earth abide – God forever reigns in Zion!

He is faithful evermore; He gives justice to the poor,
feeds the hungry from His store – God forever reigns in Zion!

Jesus sets the pris'ner free, heals blind eyes that they may see,
lifts those burdened painfully – God forever reigns in Zion!

He the righteous loves the best; wand'ers in His grace are blessed.
Needy ones in Him find rest – God forever reigns in Zion!

But the wicked who defame His eternal blessèd Name,
them He brings to ruin and shame – God forever reigns in Zion!

5 The Value of the Kingdom

Pray Psalm 138.7, 8.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand
Against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.
The LORD will perfect *that which* concerns me;
Your mercy, O LORD, *endures* forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

Sing Psalm 138.7, 8.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Your Right Hand will save and keep me; all I need You will supply.
For Your love is everlasting, reaching from beyond the sky.
You will not forsake or leave me; You will save me when I cry.

Read Matthew 13.1-50; meditate on verses 44-50.

Prepare.

1. According to Jesus, how valuable is the Kingdom of God?
2. What new insight to the Kingdom does the parable of the dragnet offer?

Meditate.

These three parables address the subject of the value of the Kingdom. How valuable is it? How should we regard the Kingdom, in terms of its value in relation to other things?

Jesus had already commanded His followers to seek the Kingdom as the defining priority of their lives (Matt. 6.33). He taught us to pray that the Kingdom might come on earth with the same presence, radiance, and power it has in heaven (Matt. 6.10). Here He emphasizes the great value of the Kingdom: The Kingdom is not merely as valuable as anything we could imagine or possess; it is *more* valuable than everything else. The man and the merchant in the first two parables sold *everything they had* to gain the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom, Jesus says, is more valuable than everything you have or ever can have.

Is this the way we think about the Kingdom of God?

The parable of the dragnet (vv. 47-50) also emphasizes the value of the Kingdom, for a great catch of fish such as is here described would have brought great joy to the fishermen who achieved it. But this parable goes one step further, and adds an aspect to the Kingdom which was previously alluded to in verse 41, but only in passing. Here we learn that, when the final gathering of the Kingdom is accomplished “at the end of the age” (v. 49), there will be many among the true citizens of the Kingdom who don’t belong there. In the Kingdom of God there are true citizens – the just; and pretenders – the wicked. Augustine described the intermingling of the two cities – of God and of man – throughout this temporal dispensation. Here Jesus provides the basis for such thinking.

This parable, while emphasizing the value of the Kingdom, begs an important question: Am I a true and just citizen of the Kingdom of God? Or am I a wicked pretender, fooling the people who know

me, and fooling myself as well? And if I am the latter, I must be warned: A day of separation is coming, and the final disposition of the wicked will be terrible, indeed.

Jesus offers this parable as a warning to – as Peter puts it – make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1.5-11), by bringing forth Kingdom fruit that declares its great value to the people in our world.

Reflect.

1. How can we tell how much someone values the Kingdom of God?
2. Compare verses 41 and 49. What do these suggest about the *extent* of the Kingdom, as well as its *composition*?
3. What can we do to make sure that we are true and just citizens and ambassadors of the Kingdom of God?

At the end of this present age the good fish are to be sorted into baskets and the bad ones thrown away. Then all the elect will be received into eternal dwellings, and the condemned will be led away into external darkness, since they have lost the light of the kingdom within them. Meanwhile the fishing net of faith holds us together as intermingled fish both good and bad. Gregory the Great (540-604), Forty Gospel Homilies 11.4

Strengthen me, Lord, to make my calling and election sure today as I...

Pray Psalm 138.1-6.

Ask the Lord for boldness and strength to hear His words, seek His Kingdom, and live as His witness today.

Sing Psalm 138.1-6.

Psalm 138.1-6 (Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

I will give You thanks and praise You, God of gods, with all my heart.

I will bow before Your temple, grateful praise to You impart.

For Your Name and for Your glory, You have magnified Your Word!

On the day I called You answered, made me bold within my soul.

When I walk in troubled places, You revive and make me whole.

For Your hand will gently shield me, and my fearsome foes control.

All the kings of earth will praise You when Your words of truth they hear.

Of Your ways, of Your great glory gladly they will loudly cheer.

For the proud shall not approach You, yet You hold the lowly dear.

6 Understanding the Kingdom

Pray Psalm 5.11, 12.

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;
Let those also who love Your name
Be joyful in You.
For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;
With favor You will surround him as *with* a shield.

Sing Psalm 5.11, 12.

(Angel's Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

Let those rejoice who seek You and shelter 'neath Your wing.
Their tongues shall rise to speak to Your praise; Your grace they sing.
Your people You will bless, Lord, all those who to You yield.
Preserve them with Your best Word, and guard them like a shield.

Read Matthew 13.1-58; meditate on verses 51-58.

Prepare.

1. If we understand Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom, what should we be like?
2. How did the people of Jesus' "own country" respond to His teaching?

Meditate.

Having finished this teaching segment, Jesus asked His disciples whether they understood "all these things" (v. 51). They indicated they did. And, at one level, I'm sure they were being honest.

But *understanding* a teaching is one thing; *learning* it is another. The disciples had not yet learned the Kingdom, but they would, in time. And they would come to treasure it, even to the point of giving their lives for it.

Jesus elaborated on one aspect of what it means to be "instructed" concerning the Kingdom of heaven – that is, truly to learn it (v. 52). As we learn the Kingdom, we bring out its bounty (Greek: θησαυρός, *thesaurus* – *treasury*) to enjoy and share. The Kingdom is not just an idea. It's a reality that brings blessing to all who participate in it. The phrase "*things* new and old" may have connoted wine to the disciples, or other precious items. We may understand Jesus as referring to old and new aspects of the Kingdom, or even Old and New Testaments (though there was no New Testament in Jesus' day). We are to enjoy, experience, proclaim, and share all aspects of the Kingdom from whatever source we find them, whether old or new.

In Jesus home town of Nazareth, His teaching was not well received (vv. 53-57; cf. Lk. 4.16-30). The people were astonished at His teaching, but mainly because they didn't expect it to come from Him. He was, after all, just the local carpenter's son, wasn't He?

Well, no. And their failure to believe in Him when He applied the prophecies of Scripture to Himself deprived them of the greater blessing of His ministry (v. 58). Jesus withholds blessing where faith is not in evidence.

Rather than let their astonishment lead to wonder, and wonder to faith, the people of Nazareth became “offended at Him” (v. 57). People will always be offended at the teaching of Jesus, but that didn’t stop Him from teaching, and it shouldn’t stop us from talking about Him. Their unbelief will be their loss; our faithfulness in proclaiming Christ and His Kingdom will be our gain.

Have we understood all these things?

Reflect.

1. How would you explain the relationship between understanding and learning?
2. What are some examples of “*things* old and new” that you delight in about the Kingdom of God?
3. What can we do so that, when we’re talking to people about Jesus, and they become offended, they are offended because *Him* and not because of *us*?

A scribe is one who, through continual reading of the Old and New Testaments, has laid up for himself a storehouse of knowledge. Thus Christ blesses those who have gathered in themselves the education both of the law and of the gospel, so as to “bring forth from their treasure things both new and old.” Cyril of Alexandria (375-444), Fragment 172

Send me forth in the joy of Your Kingdom, Lord, as I go out to...

Pray Psalm 5.1-8.

What will you bring of the Kingdom – old things and new – in working your Personal Mission Field today?

Sing Psalm 5.1-8.

Psalm 5.1-8 (Angel’s Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

O Lord, attend and hear me, consider how I groan.
Receive my cries and near be, and love me as Your own.
By morning, Lord I seek You, for You will hear my voice.
My every need You speak to, and make my soul rejoice!

In sin You take no pleasure; no evil dwells with You.
Vain boasts You will not treasure, nor those who boasting do.
Sin kindles Your hot anger, You crush all those who lie.
The violent live in danger of Your all-searching eye.

O Lord, Your lovingkindness escorts me in this place.
I bow before Your highness and praise Your glorious grace!
In righteous ways You guide me; Your pathway I will know.
No good will be denied me as I with Jesus go.

7 What a Kingdom!

Pray Psalm 110.3, 4.

Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”

Sing Psalm 110.3, 4.

(Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation)
Filled with the Spirit's power, in holy robes of love,
from early morning's hour they serve their Lord above.
Christ reigns a priest forever, the King of Righteousness
and King of Peace who ever His chosen ones will bless.

Read and meditate on Matthew 13.1-58.

Prepare.

1. How many different ways does Jesus illustrate the Kingdom of God in this chapter?
2. What's the purpose of all these parables?

Meditate.

Matthew 13 is like watching a trailer for a movie entitled, “The Coming Kingdom of God!” We get to see the Kingdom from a variety of angles, using a wide assortment of illustrative devices. Jesus didn't teach the Kingdom in abstract, philosophical or theological terms. He was not appealing primarily to the *minds* of His hearers.

Jesus aimed at their *hearts*. He wanted them to *desire* the Kingdom, not to be able to define or debate it. He projected the Kingdom on them in familiar tropes – fields, plants, pearls, treasure, nets. The people who heard Him knew these things, and Jesus showed how each offered a powerful insight to the Kingdom He had come to proclaim and bring near.

Those who had ears to hear would have grasped immediately what Jesus was seeking to convey. And they would have been reminded of what Jesus taught each time they came across one or another of those items during the course of their day.

Jesus made His teaching “sticky” – easy to remember and exciting to contemplate. He drew from Old Testament prophecies and types as well as New Testament images and truths. He wants us to desire the Kingdom, so that we will seek it as the defining priority of our lives (Matt. 6.33), and pray earnestly and every day that it might come on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6.10). Jesus wants us to lay hold on the Kingdom with holy spiritual violence (Matt. 11.12), so He describes it in terms we can readily grasp, and that excite us with the prospects of what can happen as the Kingdom over which He rules as Lord comes in and through us and throughout the world.

What a Kingdom we have to bring to our Personal Mission Fields!

Reflect.

1. Jesus said that some people would not get excited about the Kingdom of God. Why not?
2. How would you summarize what Jesus taught us to think about the Kingdom of God?
3. Why is it a good idea to meditate on these parables of the Kingdom?

We then say, Those things which are brought forth from the old are enlightened through the new. We therefore come to the Lord that the veil may be removed. Augustine (354-430), Sermon 74.5

Fill me with longing to know more of Your Kingdom, Lord, as I...

Pray Psalm 110.1-3, 5-7.

Seek the Lord to help you proclaim His Kingdom and righteousness today.

Sing Psalm 110.1-3, 5-7.

Psalm 110.1-3, 5-7 (Aurelia: *The Church's One Foundation*)

“Sit by Me at My right hand,” the Lord says to my Lord,
“until I make Your foot stand on all who hate Your Word.”
From in His Church the Savior rules all His enemies;
while those who know His favor go forth the Lord to please.

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord, in wrath shall shatter kings,
when judgment by His strong Word He to the nations brings.
Then, all His foes defeated, He takes His hard-won rest,
in glorious triumph seated with us, redeemed and blessed!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why are parables a powerful way of teaching?
2. Who will hear the parables and learn from them? Who will not?
3. Summarize what Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God in this chapter.
4. Do these parables make you desire the Kingdom? Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 13.1-58? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.